

Seattle Light Rail Review Panel Meeting Notes for January 18, 2005

Agenda Items:

First Hill Station
Capitol Hill Station
Brooklyn Station
University of Washington Station
Montlake Vent Shaft Facility

Panel Members Present

- Jay Lazerwitz
- David Spiker, Chair
- Pam Beyette
- Cathy Hillenbrand
- George Blomberg
- Richard Andrews

- Tory Laughlin Taylor

Staff Present

- John Walser, Sound Transit
- Lisa Rutzick, CityDesign
- Holly Godard, CityDesign

The meeting opened with introductions.

LRRP Business

Lisa updated the Panel on the following items:

Tonight's agenda

January Sound Transit and City Council Committee meetings

February 1 LRRP meeting

Public Comment

No public present to comment.

Overview, North Link First Hill and Capitol Hill – 15% (First LRRP Review)

John Walser, Sound Transit

Background and Proposal:

John Walser of Sound Transit described the possible Light Rail schedule and alignment. He noted that at this point the architectural design teams are asked to study and present preliminary studies which will be used for funding scope to aid Sound Transit in estimating costs of the north link. These studies represent station organization/circulation and massing solutions. Identification of finishes and design of building exteriors will occur as part of final design. The preliminary studies will be presented tonight. Final architectural design (including 30%, 60% and 90% reviews) will occur after Sound Transit Board discussions this Fall.

Discussion:

Mr. Walser explained that the North Link will create a route from Westlake Station to Northgate. It will begin with a tunnel under Interstate-5, stop near Swedish hospital, (First Hill Station), go to the east of Broadway, (Capitol Hill Station) under the ship canal, and make a stop at the University of Washington (UW Station) stadium station. It will continue in a tunnel under the University of Washington, to Brooklyn stop at 43rd and 45th, (Brooklyn Station), next will be a Roosevelt station, either at 12th or 8th, (The 12th Avenue alignment was chosen by Sound Transit), then the line will be

in an open cut along I-5 to Northgate. (Northgate Station)...(The Central link Stadium station will serve the baseball and football stadiums and the north link “stadium “ station will be named the University of Washington stadium station).

Three segments will be presented in the next few weeks. Tonight’s presentation will be a discussion of the First Hill Station, Capitol Hill Station, and Brooklyn Station, UW Station and the vent facility. There will be a presentation of the Northgate Station and an update on the Roosevelt Station on February 1, 2005 before this panel.

Mr. Walser explained that the First Hill segment is a deep tunnel, “mined” station. Contractors will excavate (2) 46 foot diameter shafts, 210 feet deep at the station entrances and then mine cross-passages to connect with the platform areas. There will not be a lot of interior space. High speed elevators will be the public circulation. They will provide a direct connection between the surface plazas and the station platforms below. At grade there will be a service building at each entrance housing 4 elevators, ticketing machines, and mechanical equipment. The buildings will have roof extensions or canopies to provide weather protection for patrons accessing the ticketing machines and elevators. There will be plazas connecting adjacent sidewalks and station elevators. Groups of people in surges of 25 will circulate up and down.

The Capitol Hill station will be a “cut and cover” station. It will be a shallower excavation. Construction will look like excavating an open box perhaps 90 to 100 feet deep. Circulation will be a combination of escalators with stairways and elevator for barrier free access. A different type of surface structure is associated with cut and cover stations. Instead of no interior access for passengers typified by a deep mined station, people will enter cut and cover station buildings. There will be a roof and maybe sidewalls for weather protection. There is an opportunity for more building features and fare vending under a roof. This station will not require large open plazas since passengers are not leaving the station in large groups from elevators.

The common design program for the stations is two (2) ticket vending machines (TVM) per entrance with expandability, signage for way finding, card readers, emergency phones, bike storage in one or both entrances, and a paratransit stop with nearby sheltered bench with phone.

First Hill Station – (15%) (First LRRP Review)

Alan Hart of Via-Suzuki

Presentation:

Mr. Hart presented the concepts and preliminary design ideas for the two head houses, plazas, circulation and platforms for the First Hill Station. The station head houses are both located on Madison Avenue at the intersections of Boylston and Summit

East head house – Boylston Avenue and Madison Street

As previously mentioned this station serves a mined, deep tunnel. This station will serve the Broadway and hospital “catchment” area. The area is both a destination and “collection” neighborhood. Considering the large scale of area, the station head houses will be something remarkable with a plaza for a comfortable environment. The 25-30 person elevators will be somewhat small in scale. The two head houses will present a family of plaza and station houses. The area context and public street realm is “mature”. Plaza and elevators will form a constant

relationship and be predictable. There is a grade change on Madison and Boylston. There will be a 1 and 1/2 story service building to define the plaza. The proposal suggests a garden, plaza, plaza wall, with service to mechanical systems away from public. An information board and ticket vending will be nearby. Bike stalls and lockers are proposed.

West head house - Summit Avenue and Madison Street

The plaza on Summit is proposed to be landscaped with space for future bicycle stalls. All of the services and mechanical access and service parking will be off of the alley on the west side. There will be expanded sidewalks, to 20 feet, on Madison for both plazas. The elevators require about 38-40 feet high spaces for overrun and equipment rooms.

Panel questions:

Where is Paratransit located? Paratransit is on Summit at the west head house. Located within the plaza would be a canopy, and phone for paratransit patrons.

Can the west plaza be rotated and could the west head house be moved to the north of the plaza?

The elevators are located based on the tunnel alignment below. The elevators dictate the siting of the headhouse and plaza orientation. Service area is needed and the building along the alley would allow the maximum service and access and service parking along alley. The plaza will be for public use, for circulation and a new bus stop on Madison to be folded into the future design. Public and North Link station patrons could use the plaza. It is possible that a retail establishment could set up café tables. A utility hook up for a vendor or street cart should be available. Unlike the west head house, the east head house change in grade allows for underground access to mechanical and support.

Where are the staging sites? Sound Transit will use sites for staging and then the sites will be put on sale to the general market, or there could be a possible joint development between Sound Transit and a developer.

What is the adjacent zoning? The zoning is Neighborhood Commercial 3 with 160 foot height limit (NC3-160). The Head house plans take into account neighboring sites which could be redeveloped to incorporate or seem to incorporate the plaza into a new development.

Can sustainable design be incorporated into the program? Sustainable building concepts and green roofs on head houses could be explored. Sound Transit is gathering more information on green roofs.

Can more landscape be added? Plants can be added. Regular landscape maintenance is difficult for transit agencies so the design teams look for a balance between what can be maintained well and what would look nice.

What buildings will be removed? Buildings that will be taken out include a one story Key Bank and a US Bank and parking lot. The east head house is currently a check cashing business.

How will design ideas be carried forward to permitting application review? The City may publish a Director's Rule for major transportation facilities including a 20 foot sidewalk. The sidewalk width would apply to all street frontages that Sound Transit impacts.

What are the covered areas? There will be canopies at the elevators and at ticket vending. The designer tries to accommodate a 15 degree rain angle to provide a dry area in front of the elevator. That measurement can approximate a 20 foot projection for the canopy.

What is the plan for signage? There will be a Way Finding Plan for the whole system. There will be a standardized sign program for Sound Transit, for Sounder, Regional express and Link. There will be a Link marker at streets and Link entrances. There will be signage panels with maps of neighborhoods, information on how to use the system, make connections, Metro bus, etc. There will be tactile way-finding system-wide.

What will the platform look like? The Platform design takes its form and shape from the boring machine. The overall concept is to tie the stations together with signage, lighting, and design elements while making it maintainable. The design concepts are not developed here. The station will be finished on the platform floor, but the tube may be left expressed.

Action and Summary:

The Board applauds the neighborhood integration effort at street level. The designers should further explore the concept of the head houses as beacons. The head houses could look lantern-like and have a large amount of transparency/opacity. The head houses should be made of quality and long lasting materials. The Panel recommends adjusting the west head house siting so that the full plaza opens on to Madison with the service building at the north edge. The plazas should be treated as public space; public seating and planting should be abundant. Create a plaza where one might go on a nice day, that is, with landscape architectural elements such as seating, seating steps, shade, sun, conversation areas, provide a sense of enclosure, yet safe. **The Panel members present voted to approve this preliminary (15%) design.**

Capitol Hill– (15%) (First LRRP Review)

Alan Hart of Via-Suzuki

This station began station layout in mid 2000. It is what is called a cut and cover station box. The current location is now out of Cal Anderson Park and the south entrance has moved 1/2 block to the north on Broadway at East Denny Street. This scenario will cause about 68 residential units to be displaced. Several Open House presentations have been held to inform the public. There will be redevelopment opportunities with this concept. Opportunities may involve Seattle Housing Association and others after construction. There is an optional 3rd entrance on the west side of Broadway just to the north of the Seattle Central Community College property. An underground tunnel would help community college patrons and staff to walk under Broadway instead of crossing at street level. With cost sharing of design, security, construction, etc. with Seattle Central Community College the Sound Transit Board may decide to include this 3rd entrance in the scope of work for final design.

This station has the Seattle Central Community College, which is a major destination, along with Capitol Hill commercial establishments and a lot of residential uses. Locating the station here and its accompanying redevelopment potential could be a catalyst for area revitalization. The light rail patron will have a street, escalator, platform progression of movement. The elevators at this station are secondary means of access.

The designer's concept is to maximize the use of the created box, the cut and cover "box". In this concept there is not a separate need to create a large head house. The Station box will be the parameter to explore. The train platform would be open and clean to the mezzanine. From the mezzanine escalators connect to a concourse 25 feet below street level. The interior would feel and be experienced as if the building is an atrium. The open nature of the atrium would aid in patron comfort and in creating a sense of security. Visibility should be maximized in the underground circulation. The entries would be glass boxes at either end. In this concept, they would not serve as beacons but as serviceable entries to fit in with the future development.

The patron experience at street level would be one of small scale systems. The concept could be an old hardware store or bank, one and one half stories high. When the adjacent use is built the station entry plaza would be in scale as a unit. The actual design of the above ground building would be at a later stage, but the entry could be integrated into another building or stand alone. The emphasis will be for design development to determine what is built back around and over the station entries not so much the station itself. The station spaces should be a sequence of experiences that is light, bright, and open. It should be a welcoming building with an emphasis on the public nature of the streets, Broadway, Denny and Howell. There is a nine (9) foot grade change along the block. Bicycle parking could be included along with night time security grills. The station service parking fits well with access on Nagel. The goal would be to develop an entry plaza that opens to the sidewalk. The building could be brick, because of the surrounding community materials with tile or other architectural elements to give the building a richness and sense of the area's texture. At this point the proposal is a functional diagram and the open-to-air and scale of above ground buildings is an element of the future design parti.

Discussion and Questions:

What would be the optimum look of the final design? The best final design would enhance and express the public face of the development. The Light Rail Review Panel can recommend appropriate designs to Sound Transit to carry through the concept and final design. Light Rail Review Panel could recommend a modern interpretation of the open air metaphor by using almost any material. This can serve as a strong concept to carry into final design.

Explain more about the overbuild building and its associated scale. The uppermost concept is to enhance and expand the public realm from the sidewalk through an open air, covered, store/plaza to the station entries. The next architect will visit this panel at 30% design, 60 % and finally 90% design.

Review the patron's pathway to buy a ticket, enter and board the train. The designer described the sequence of descending to the light rail platform.

Are surge areas considered? Yes, they would function on all levels and at the plaza level.

Is the future rezone of Broadway considered? Yes, housing could include low income housing.

Will there be another Capitol Hill Station? Another Capitol Hill station is not in the works.

Who will redevelop the staging site? There will be future developers or consultants for the staging site design. Concurrent design could be a possibility.

Action and Summary:

The Light Rail Review Panel thanked the design team. The Panel encourages exploration of the open and covered plaza concept at street level. It should be illuminated with careful attention to finish materials. The Panel appreciates the “overbuild” concept which would redevelop the site to its optimum use while integrating the light rail station entries. The Panel suggests that the overbuild be integrated, if possible, with the station development, plaza entries and uses. The urban design public face should be developed at the next stage. Develop the open air concept response to existing elements. The 3rd entrance is a good idea and the designers should continue a partnership with the Community College. **The Panel members present voted to approve this preliminary (15%) design.**

Brooklyn Station – (15%) (First LRRP Review)

Greg Baldwin of ZGF Architects

Both Brooklyn and the University of Washington stations will be cut and cover stations. The University of Washington Station is very deep. It will be over 100 feet deep while Capitol Hill is 85-90 feet deep and Brooklyn will be 75 feet deep.

The Brooklyn Station north entrance will be at the Safeco Building Plaza. The Safeco building will have potential development near the station similar to conditions at First Hill. It is a cut and cover station. During construction a lot of soil will be removed. There will be efforts to minimize disruptions. The goal is to build something quiet in its civic contribution and to keep the impacts as simple as possible.

There is redevelopment between 45th and 43rd on Brooklyn. It is a stable neighborhood, with strong commercial establishments and near a key campus entry. There will be two entrances. The north entry will be a plaza north of Safeco tower. The south entry will be at 43rd and Brooklyn. The objective is to have very little “stuff” at the entries. There will be an elevator, stairs, escalators, exit stairs, vent, and ticket vending. The vent could even be moved to new development across the street. Including just the basic elements for patron travel will help the continuity of travel, better patron experience, be safer, and create a sense of safety. At the plaza approach one should never be lost in a hallway or move out of direction. The designer hopes to maintain a large volume of space. The Prototype is for emergency exits to be at the ends of the “vessel”, the station box. The back-of-house functions are also at either end. Circulation is in the station box. The design of the north plaza should relate to the plaza at the ground floor of Safeco. There will be a ticket vending machine (TVM) at the plaza. There will be a glass roof so one can see through the plaza space. The south end entry has an alley and is open to Brooklyn and 43rd. The general objective here is to minimize the street level elements as well. The station itself will be a large space yet have a tight envelop. The large box wall will be a big wall. It could be left in a rough state, as long as the platform is finished and the escalator experience is comfortable. There could be see-through layers of glass which can provide some animation of people and architecture. The concept is to take advantage of the hole and expose the industry that made it while not letting the people get lost.

Discussion and Questions:

The Panel noted that they thought the Safeco plaza “extension “ was a very good concept and that it is an approach that looks appropriately corporate and elegant at this location. They noted also that the south entrance should be visible from the University grounds. They thought that the location is an opportunity and could be designed a little differently to be overt and beckoning to University patrons. Since the entry is near a major research institution there is an opportunity to “make dramatic Architecture”. The Panel would like to see access to the plaza from 43rd to see it opened up to “catch” passers-by. The Panel suggested the architect create a landmark, redefine the corner, and explore the canopy and sidewalk. There should be some architectural statement that is more emphatic. There is a forced compression at the sidewalk between the station and the University for patrons on the 43rd street sidewalk which should be considered in future design.

Will the ridership vary much at each entry? The ridership at each end is expected to be well-balanced.

What is the concept of showing the technology within the station? It would depend on the availability of the caissons, and detailing to avoid the drips and leaks, so “detailing” the structural would carry out the concept. Elements would be important for this concept to work. The finished station box liner and lid should be very finished and would work with the “rough” juxtaposition. An artist could use the area as a canvas or backdrop for a dramatic lighting installation. The next level of designers will be able to pick up the threads of this idea and carry them forward.

How will box roof be constructed? The roof is a slab and would need to be designed further.

Action and Summary:

The Panel commended the architect for clear presentation and interesting concepts. The north Safeco plaza entrance should be further developed and appears to be a good idea at this location and the end result should be a better plaza engaging 45th Street. An expanded Safeco plaza would serve as a welcome gift to the community. The simplicity of the plaza design concept is good and its relationship to the Safeco lobby with transparent, illuminated areas should all be retained. The south entrance should be studied further to use the opportunity to create a bold and more emphatic entrance. Make the south entrance identifiable from University Avenue and the University itself. Both sites can be very different and an outstanding part of the urban environment. Define the corner of 43rd and Brooklyn and use the importance of the alley as an opportunity in design development. The Panel recommends maintaining the station box as a large volume with simple pedestrian flow. **The Panel recommends approval of the 15% presentation.**

University of Washington Station – (15%) (First LRRP Review)

Greg Baldwin of ZGF Architects

This station is located on Montlake Boulevard Northeast, near Pacific Place and Pacific Street. The station has two entrances and maybe a third entrance on the Burke Gilman Trail. The area is characterized by large scale buildings and large scale open space. One design tenet is to preserve the Rainier Vista from Red Square on the University of Washington campus to Mt Rainier. Accordingly this station and accompanying vent will not be seen from Rainier Vista. University of Washington plans for the area include replacing the evergreen screen along Montlake Boulevard and the Husky Stadium edge with deciduous trees. The existing street crosswalks will remain. The

University of Washington will retain its parking. The station is not proposed to meet the State Route 520 traffic. The University of Washington asks Sound Transit to not design for the Husky stadium traffic which occurs only about six times each year. The interior is also not designed for the infrequent football crowds, but for the projected daily volume.

The design objective is to gather from several pedestrian entry points. One major entry entrance would be near the Metro buses at the triangle garage. The other would be near the Husky Stadium entrance. The designers propose an underground mezzanine to meet both entrances at a large space to descend to the light rail platform. The circulation will be practically “invisible” on the surface. New fire codes require additional enclosed stairwells so the first mezzanine will need to be a new environment that is, door panels are installed which would close in an emergency. Ticket vending would happen at the mezzanine. The University of Washington prefers few openings at grade. Circulation at Pacific Street should be seized. There are options of underground passageways and other circulation concepts to gather rail patrons. One alternative entrance is to connect by means of an overhead passageway to the Burke Gilman trail. A lot of University of Washington Medical Center patrons cross Pacific Street at the bridge further west and then use the Burke Gilman to access the triangle parking garage and Metro bus stop. According to ridership models 60% of the ridership will come from the north or the Burke Gilman alternative entrance.

Panel Response and Questions:

How would the passage way use the triangle garage space? The pedestrian tunnel will use part of the Montlake triangle to introduce light and air into the tunnel, but will not put pedestrians into the space with the parked cars.

What is the Stadium entry going to look like? In general there will be modest entrances and a grand station. The entry at Husky Stadium will be entry as a scoop.

It seems that the Medical and Health Center orientation is not as strong as it should be. The Health Center group crosses to the Burke Gilman to access the north entrance.

Will this reinforce the Burke Gilman trail? As much as possible a light rail connection would allow access from the trail to the light rail without crossing streets at the surface grade.

What is the east west point to connect with this north south? There is none at this point.

Action and Summary:

The Light Rail Review Panel complements the designers for the overviews and diagrams to see into the design. The clear and simple presentation and illustrations easily show how it could work. The Panel stresses the importance of working with pedestrian traffic and transit connections. The Panel recommends developing the third entrance into a viable entry point. The relationship of I-520 connections to the University of Washington should be maximized and considered seriously. The Panel recommends elevators that go all the way to the mezzanine. The Panel recommends that the staging areas should keep all the landscaping possible and retain the University of Washington identified trees. The Light Rail Review Panel recommends approval of this (15%) design. **The Panel members present voted to approve this preliminary (15%) design.**

Montlake Vent Shaft (15%) (First LRRP Review)

John Walser, Sound Transit

The purpose of the Montlake Vent Shaft is to provide emergency ventilation into the light rail system. The site is at State Route 520 and Montlake which is the current site of the Hop-in Grocery and Texaco gas station. There will be fan equipment to extract smoke or to pump fresh air into the tunnel. There will also be electrical transformers, but not much more equipment. The vent machinery will be located in the parking lot behind the Hop-in. There will be service vehicle parking. A one story building will house the machinery. The vent is at the west end of the small site and is proposed to be about 14 feet tall. The Vent opening is protected and screened for security. The accompanying shaft will be 27 feet in diameter. There will be additional design opportunities to determine the project materials, type of roof, extent of the wall and door for a courtyard, or other screening, security scenarios. The current Cellular tower will be removed. The site will be configured so that the market can continue to operate.

Panel Response and Questions:

What is the status of the State Route 520 expansion? The future State Route 520 easement will shrink the site.

What type of noise will be created by this project? Maintenance workers will “exercise” the fans once a month. There will be no constant HVAC fans running.

Why is this a stand alone vent? Typically the tunnel is ventilated at each station. The distance between the Capitol Hill Station and Stadium Station is greater and the additional vent location is necessary. All the other stations have a vent associated with their project requirements.

Action and Summary:

The Light Rail Review Panel thanks Sound Transit for the vent shaft presentation. The Panel approves the modest scale and program suggestion at this small site. The Panel recommends that the associated machinery, parking and screening be continued as presented, that is, tucked into a good location for the scale of the structure. The Panel looks forward to commenting on the additional design opportunities to determine the project materials, type of roof, extent of the wall and door for a courtyard, or other screening, security scenarios. **The Panel members present voted to approve this preliminary (15%) design.**